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freedom and humanity, than the continuance of slavery, as it now exists in this country, for a thousand years. But this is not the alternative presented. The institution of slavery contains within itself the principles of its own destruction, and will die a natural death at one time or another. Whether this catastrophe can be much expedited by the use of any artificial expedients, is exceedingly doubtful. That it will not be expedited by the agitation of projects of immediate abolition in the free States, is a point that admits of no doubt, and one which we earnestly recommend to the attention of the real friends of humanity and the country.

ART. IX.—*Franklin's Familiar Letters.*

A Collection of the Familiar Letters and Miscellaneous Papers of Benjamin Franklin; now for the first time published. Boston. 1833.

THE impression has always prevailed to a considerable extent, that Franklin was a selfish man, and that he took no interest in any thing which did not tend either to flatter his vanity, or advance the purposes of his ambition. It was sufficiently evident that the philosophic repose, which has always been ascribed to him, by no means prevented him from observing others; and that, instead of being indifferent to them, he was one of the most shrewd and sarcastic of men: but there are no traces of bitterness,—no appearances of envy or jealousy,—no attempts to injure the standing of others, in any of his writings which the world has ever seen; so that this impression concerning him seems rather traditional and indefinite, than sustained either by the spirit of his familiar writings, the records of his life, or the testimony of those who knew him best.

Political men may have been prejudiced against him from personal motives, and their hostile feelings would, of course, be shared by all the members of their party. The impression, too, would be confirmed by inferences drawn from the spirit of some of his writings. He gave practical rules for the government of life; he recommended a thriving, minute attention to the details of business, a close regard to small gains, which, to many, would have an air of selfishness about them,

since they seem to concentrate upon one's own prosperity all the powers of the mind and the affections of the heart. But those who are acquainted with men, know full well that so far from being inconsistent with generous feeling, this habitual exactness is necessary, to make generosity of any value : without this practical sagacity, it spends itself in feeling, or runs to waste, and neither benefits its possessor nor the world. He was in the habit of attaching conditions to his gifts, which sometimes seemed to lessen his reputation for liberality : but it was afterwards found, that the favor had been doubled instead of diminished, by a compliance with the conditions which had been exacted. We have seen more instances than one, of princely benefactions, thus accompanied with conditions, which at first seemed embarrassing and impracticable, but which afterwards proved to be so judicious, and tended so much to the prosperity of the receiver, that he felt as much gratitude to his benefactor for those conditions, as for the donation itself. That kind of liberality, which secures as far as possible the right use of its gifts, is the most desirable in the world. It is true, that there are those, who insist upon doing favors in their own way as they call it, and make it manifest that they are thinking all the while more of themselves than of others. Such, however, was not the case with Franklin.

Those who have indulged the suspicion that the integrity of Franklin was apt to be overcome by self-interest, have brought forward certain passages in his published correspondence, in which he alludes to a proposed grant from the crown, which, they imagined was solicited for himself and his son. Mr. Sparks, however, has removed all the mystery of this transaction. It appears, that while Franklin was residing in England, as agent for Pennsylvania, a company was formed by Sir William Johnson and others in America, who requested Dr. Franklin to use his influence to procure for them a grant of land in the Ohio country. This bore the name of *Walpole's Grant*, so called from Mr. Walpole, a banker in London, who was placed at the head of the company. All the petitions and other proceedings of this company were public, and Franklin had no more personal interest, than any other individual of the numerous proprietors. The plan succeeded so far as respected the grant, but the disorders of the country, which were then beginning, prevented its execution.

But those who have never doubted the uprightness of Dr.

Franklin, and have given him credit for general liberality, and good feeling, have not, we believe, regarded him as a warm-hearted man or an active friend. This book will serve to give a different impression. There is something exceedingly pleasing in the interest which he expresses for his connexions, the kind attention and advice which he gives them, the forbearance with which he treats their faults, and the pleasure with which he encourages their virtues. Some of these letters were written more than a century ago, when he was poor and unknown: they therefore show the man as he was,—not when he lived in the broad sunshine of life, where it is easy to be generous,—but as he was when struggling with difficulties, and laden with cares, which seem to have left him little time to think of others. But we will let them speak for themselves. They will bear a favorable testimony to the character of Franklin.

It may be proper here to remark, that all of the thirteen brothers and sisters of Dr. Franklin, who reached the age of maturity, excepting two, died before he had attained to wealth and eminence; but his correspondence with his sister, who resided in this city, was affectionate and unremitted till the last moment of his life. The three letters which follow were addressed to his sister Jane Franklin, afterwards Mrs. Mecom.

‘*Philadelphia, 6 January, 1726–7.*

‘I am highly pleased with the account Captain Freeman gives me of you. I always judged by your behavior when a child, that you would make a good, agreeable woman, and you know you were ever my peculiar favorite. I have been thinking what would be a suitable present for me to make, and for you to receive, as I hear you are grown a celebrated beauty. I had almost determined on a tea-table; but when I considered, that the character of a good housewife was far preferable to that of being only a pretty gentlewoman, I concluded to send you a *spinning-wheel*, which I hope you will accept as a small token of my sincere love and affection.

‘Sister, farewell, and remember that modesty, as it makes the most homely virgin amiable and charming, so the want of it infallibly renders the most perfect beauty disagreeable and odious. But when that brightest of female virtues shines among other perfections of body and mind in the same person, it makes the woman more lovely than an angel. Excuse this freedom, and use the same with me.’

‘*Philadelphia, 21 May, 1752.*

‘I received yours with the affecting news of our dear good mother's death. I thank you for your long continued care of her in her old age and sickness. Our distance made it impracticable for us to attend her, but you have supplied all. She has lived a good life, as well as a long one, and is happy.’

‘*New York, 19 April, 1757.*

‘I wrote a few lines to you yesterday, but omitted to answer yours, relating to sister Douse. As *having their own way* is one of the greatest comforts of life to old people, I think their friends should endeavor to accommodate them in that, as well as in any thing else. When they have long lived in a house, it becomes natural to them; they are almost as closely connected with it, as the tortoise with his shell; they die, if you tear them out of it; old folks and old trees, if you remove them, 't is ten to one that you kill them; so let our good old sister be no more importuned on that head. We are growing old fast ourselves, and shall expect the same kind of indulgences; if we give them, we shall have a right to receive them in our turn.

‘And as to her few fine things, I think she is in the right not to sell them, and for the reason she gives, that they will fetch but little; when that little is spent, they would be of no further use to her; but perhaps the expectation of possessing them at her death may make that person tender and careful of her, and helpful to her to the amount of ten times their value. If so, they are put to the best use they possibly can be.

‘I hope you visit sister as often as your affairs will permit, and afford her what assistance and comfort you can in her present situation. *Old age, infirmities* and *poverty*, joined, are afflictions enough. The *neglect* and *slights* of friends and near relations should never be added. People in her circumstances are apt to suspect this sometimes without a cause; *appearances* should therefore be attended to, in our conduct towards them, as well as *realities*. I write by this post to cousin Williams, to continue his care, which I doubt not he will do.’

Another letter, addressed in 1760 to his sister, contains the following account of his family.

‘It is remarkable, that so many breaches by death should be made in our family in so short a space. Out of seventeen children, that our father had, thirteen lived to grow up and settle in the world. I remember these thirteen (some of us then very young) all at one table, when an entertainment was made at our house, on occasion of the return of our brother Josiah, who had

been absent in the East Indies, and unheard of for nine years. Of these thirteen, there now remain but three. As our number diminishes, let our affection to each other rather increase ; for, besides its being our duty, 't is our interest, since the more affectionate relations are to each other, the more they are respected by the rest of the world.'

The following characteristic letter was addressed to Miss Stevenson, afterwards Mrs. Hewson, the daughter of a lady at whose house he resided during his visit to London in 1758. His regard for both these ladies appears to have been firm and constant. It is observed by Mr. Sparks, that this house is still standing in Craven Street, in London, and is yet considered, from the circumstance of Franklin's residence in it, as an object of curiosity, by travellers.

‘ *Paris, 14 September, 1767.*

‘ I am always pleased with a letter from you, and I flatter myself you may be sometimes pleased in receiving one from me, though it should be of little importance, such as this, which is to consist of a few occasional remarks made here, and in my journey hither.

‘ Soon after I left you in that agreeable society at Bromley, I took the resolution of making a trip with Sir John Pringle into France. We set out on the 28th past. All the way to Dover we were furnished with post-chaises, hung so as to lean forward, the top coming down over one's eyes, like a hood, as if to prevent one's seeing the country ; which being one of my great pleasures, I was engaged in perpetual disputes with the innkeepers, ostlers, and postilions, about getting the straps taken up a hole or two before, and let down as much behind, they insisting that the chaise leaning forward was an ease to the horses, and that the contrary would kill them. I suppose the chaise leaning forward looks to them like a willingness to go forward, and that its hanging back shows reluctance. They added other reasons, that were no reasons at all, and made me, as upon a hundred other occasions, almost wish that mankind had never been endowed with a reasoning faculty, since they know so little how to make use of it, and so often mislead themselves by it, and that they had been furnished with a good sensible instinct instead of it.

‘ At Dover, the next morning, we embarked for Calais with a number of passengers, who had never before been at sea. They would previously make a hearty breakfast, because, if the wind should fail, we might not get over till supper time. Doubtless they thought, that when they had paid for their breakfast they

had a right to it, and that when they had swallowed it they were sure of it. But they had scarce been out half an hour, before the sea laid claim to it, and they were obliged to deliver it up. So that it seems there are uncertainties, even beyond those between the cup and the lip. If ever you go to sea, take my advice, and live sparingly a day or two beforehand. The sickness, if any, will be lighter and sooner over. We got to Calais that evening.

‘Various impositions we suffered from boatmen, porters, and the like, on both sides the water. I know not which are most rapacious, the English or French, but the latter have, with their knavery, most politeness.

‘The roads we found equally good with ours in England, in some places paved with smooth stones, like our new streets, for many miles together, and rows of trees on each side, and yet there are no turnpikes. But then the poor peasants complained to us grievously, that they were obliged to work upon the roads full two months in the year, without being paid for their labor. Whether this is truth, or whether, like Englishmen, they grumble, cause or no cause, I have not yet been able fully to inform myself.

‘The women we saw at Calais, on the road, at Boulogne, and in the inns and villages, were generally of dark complexions; but arriving at Abbeville we found a sudden change, a multitude of both women and men in that place appearing remarkably fair. Whether this is owing to a small colony of spinners, wool-combers, and weavers, brought hither from Holland with the woollen manufactory about sixty years ago, or to their being less exposed to the sun, than in other places, their business keeping them much within doors, I know not. Perhaps, as in some other cases, different causes may club in producing the effect, but the effect itself is certain. Never was I in a place of greater industry, wheels and looms going in every house.

‘As soon as we left Abbeville, the swarthiness returned. I speak generally; for here are some fair women at Paris, who, I think, are not whitened by art. As to rouge, they don't pretend to imitate nature in laying it on. There is no gradual diminution of the color, from the full bloom in the middle of the cheek to the faint tint near the sides, nor does it show itself differently in different faces. I have not had the honor of being at any lady's toilette to see how it is laid on, but I fancy I can tell you how it is or may be done. Cut a hole of three inches diameter in a piece of paper; place it on the side of your face in such a manner, as that the top of the hole may be just under the eye;

then, with a brush dipped in the color, paint face and paper together ; so when the paper is taken off, there will remain a round patch of red exactly the form of the hole. This is the mode, from the actresses on the stage upwards through all ranks of ladies to the princesses of the blood ; but it stops there, the Queen not using it, having in the serenity, complacence, and benignity, that shine so eminently in, or rather through her countenance, sufficient beauty, though now an old woman, to do extremely well without it.

‘ You see I speak of the Queen as if I had seen her ; and so I have, for you must know I have been at court. We went to Versailles last Sunday, and had the honor of being presented to the King ; he spoke to both of us very graciously and very cheerfully, is a handsome man, has a very lively look, and appears younger than he is. In the evening we were at the *Grand Concert*, where the family sup in public. The table was half a hollow square, the service gold. When either made a sign for drink, the word was given by one of the waiters. *A boire pour le Roi*, or, *A boire pour la Reine*. Then two persons came from within, the one with wine and the other with water in *carafes* ; each drank a little glass of what he brought, and then put both the *carafes* with a glass on a salver, and then presented it. Their distance from each other was such as that other chairs might have been placed between any two of them. An officer of the court brought us up through the crowd of spectators, and placed Sir John so as to stand between the Queen and Madame Vic-toire. The king talked a good deal to Sir John, asking many questions about our royal family ; and did me too the honor of taking some notice of me ; that is saying enough ; for I would not have you think me so much pleased with this king and queen, as to have a whit less regard than I used to have for ours. No Frenchman shall go beyond me in thinking my own king and queen the very best in the world, and the most amiable.

‘ The civilities we everywhere receive give us the strongest impressions of the French politeness. It seems to be a point settled here universally, that strangers are to be treated with respect ; and one has just the same deference shown one here by being a stranger, as in England by being a lady. The custom-house officers at Port St. Denis, as we entered Paris, were about to seize two dozen of excellent Bordeaux wine given us at Boulogne, and which we brought with us ; but as soon as they found we were strangers, it was immediately remitted on that account. At the Church of Notre Dame, where we went to see a magnificent illumination, with figures, &c. for the deceased Dauphiness,

we found an immense crowd, who were kept out by guards; but the officer being told, that we were strangers from England, he immediately admitted us, accompanied and showed us every thing. Why don't we practise this urbanity to Frenchmen? Why should they be allowed to outdo us in any thing?

'Travelling is one way of lengthening life, at least in appearance. It is but about a fortnight since we left London, but the variety of scenes we have gone through makes it seem equal to six months living in one place. Perhaps I have suffered a greater change, too, in my own person, than I could have done in six years at home. I had not been here six days, before my tailor and perruquier had transformed me into a Frenchman. Only think what a figure I make in a little bag-wig and with naked ears! They told me I was become twenty years younger, and looked very gallant.'

In the two letters which follow, we see another added to the many existing evidences of the activity of Dr. Franklin's mind. He had prepared a scheme for a new alphabet, in which all the words in the language were to be spelled according to the natural sounds of the letters, by the introduction of six new characters, and by certain changes in the vowels. The first letter was written in his own characters, and is transcribed by the editor in the common orthography.

' Craven Street, 28 September, 1768.

'The objection you make to rectifying our alphabet, "that it will be attended with inconveniences and difficulties," is a natural one; for it always occurs when any reformation is proposed, whether in religion, government, laws, and even down as low as roads and wheel-carriages. The true question, then, is not whether there will be any difficulties or inconveniences, but whether the difficulties may not be surmounted, and whether the conveniences will not, on the whole, be greater than the inconveniences. In this case, the difficulties are only in the beginning of the practice. When they are overcome, the advantages are lasting. To either you or me, who spell well in the present mode, I imagine the difficulty of changing that mode for the new is not so great, but that we might perfectly get over it in a week's time.

'As to those, who do not spell well, if the two difficulties are compared, namely, that of teaching them true spelling in the present mode, and that of teaching them the new alphabet, and the new spelling according to it, I am confident that the latter would be by far the least. They naturally fall into the new method al-

ready, as much as the imperfection of their alphabet will admit of. Their present bad spelling is only bad, because contrary to the present bad rules. The difficulty of learning to spell well in the old way is so great, that few attain it, thousands and thousands writing on to old age, without ever being able to acquire it. It is, besides, a difficulty continually increasing, as the sound gradually varies more and more from the spelling, and to foreigners it makes the learning to pronounce our language, as written in our books, almost impossible.

‘Now, as to the *inconveniences* you mention, the first is, “that all our etymologies would be lost, and consequently we could not ascertain the meaning of many words.” Etymologies are at present very uncertain; but such as they are, the old books would still preserve them, and etymologists would there find them. Words in the course of time change their meanings, as well as their spelling and pronunciation, and we do not look to etymology for their present meanings. If I should call a man a *knave* and a *villain*, he would hardly be satisfied with my telling him, that one of the words originally signified only a lad or servant; and the other an under-ploughman, or the inhabitant of a village. It is from present usage only, that the meaning of words is to be determined.

‘Your second inconvenience is, that “the distinction between words of different meaning and similar sound would be destroyed.” That distinction is already destroyed in pronouncing them; and you rely on the sense alone of the sentence to ascertain which of the several words, similar in sound, we intend. If this is sufficient in the rapidity of discourse, it will be much more so in written sentences, which may be read leisurely, and attended to more particularly in case of difficulty, than you can attend to a past sentence, while a speaker is hurrying you along with new ones.

‘Your third inconvenience is, that “all the books already written would be useless.” This inconvenience would only come on gradually, in a course of ages. You, and I, and other now living readers, would hardly forget the use of them. People would long learn to read the old writing, though they practised the new. And the inconvenience is not greater, than what has actually happened in a similar case in Italy. Formerly, its inhabitants all spoke and wrote Latin; as the language changed, the spelling followed it. It is true, that, at present, a mere unlearned Italian cannot read the Latin books, though they are still read and understood by many. But, if the spelling had never been changed, he would now have found it much more difficult to read and write his own language, for written words would

have had no relation to sounds, they would only have stood for things; so that, if he would express in writing the idea he has, when he sounds the word *Vescovo*, he must use the letters *Episcopus*. In short, whatever the difficulties and inconveniences now are, they will be more easily surmounted now, than hereafter; and some time or other it must be done, or our writing will become the same with the Chinese, as to the difficulty of learning and using it. And it would already have been such, if we had continued the Saxon spelling and writing, used by our forefathers.'

Philadelphia, 4 July, 1786.

'———You need not be concerned, in writing to me, about your bad spelling; for, in my opinion, as our alphabet now stands, the bad spelling, or what is called so, is generally the best, as conforming to the sound of the letters and of the words. To give you an instance. A gentleman received a letter, in which were these words,—*Not finding Brown at hom, I delivered your meseg to his yf.* The gentleman finding it bad spelling, and therefore not very intelligible, called his lady to help him read it. Between them they picked out the meaning of all but the *yf*, which they could not understand. The lady proposed calling her chambermaid, because Betty, says she, has the best knack at reading bad spelling of any one I know. Betty came, and was surprised that neither Sir nor Madam could tell what *yf* was. "Why," says she, "*y f* spells *wife*, what else can it spell?" And, indeed, it is a much better, as well as shorter method of spelling *wife*, than *Doubleyou, i, ef, e*, which in reality spell *Doubleyifey*.'

In a letter to Miss Catherine Ray, of Block Island, he says:

'If it was not quite unreasonable, I should desire you to write to me every post, whether you hear from me or not. As to your spelling, don't let those laughing girls put you out of conceit with it. 'T is the best in the world, for every letter of it stands for something.'

We are not sure, that the advice contained in the first part of the extract which follows, is likely to prove so advantageous, as Dr. Franklin supposes: but the suggestions of such a mind are not to be neglected.

'I would advise you to read with a pen in your hand, and enter in a little book short hints of what you find that is curious, or that may be useful; for this will be the best method of imprinting such particulars in your memory, where they will be ready,

either for practice on some future occasion, if they are matters of utility; or at least to adorn and improve your conversation, if they are rather points of curiosity. And as many of the terms of science are such, as you cannot have met with in your common reading, and may therefore be unacquainted with, I think it would be well for you to have a good dictionary at hand, to consult immediately when you meet with a word you do not comprehend the precise meaning of. This may at first seem troublesome and interrupting; but it is a trouble that will daily diminish, as you will daily find less and less occasion for your dictionary, as you become more acquainted with the terms; and in the mean time you will read with more satisfaction, because with more understanding.'

There are several letters in this volume, containing expositions of the views of Dr. Franklin on subjects connected with religious faith. We select one, written on the occasion of the death of his brother, as indicating his views in relation to the close of life.

'Philadelphia, 23 February, 1756.

'I condole with you. We have lost a most dear and valuable relation. But is the will of God and nature, that these mortal bodies be laid aside, when the soul is to enter into real life. This is rather an embryo state, a preparation for living. A man is not completely born until he be dead. Why then should we grieve, that a new child is born among the immortals, a new member added to their happy society?

'We are spirits. That bodies should be lent us, while they can afford us pleasure, assist us in acquiring knowledge, or in doing good to our fellow creatures, is a kind and benevolent act of God. When they become unfit for these purposes, and afford us pain instead of pleasure, instead of an aid become an incumbrance, and answer none of the intentions for which they were given, it is equally kind and benevolent, that a way is provided by which we may get rid of them. Death is that way. We ourselves, in some cases, prudently choose a partial death. A mangled painful limb, which cannot be restored, we willingly cut off. He, who plucks out a tooth, parts with it freely, since the pain goes with it; and he, who quits the whole body, parts at once with all pains, and possibilities of pains and diseases, which it was liable to, or capable of making him suffer.'

The world is not always in haste to listen to the suggestions of wisdom, even where they evidently coincide with interest.

If it were so, the views of Dr. Franklin on the subject of war and the security of trading vessels, would have been more generally adopted.

‘Every thing here in Europe continues to wear a good face. Russia, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland are raising a strong naval force to establish the free navigation for neutral ships, and of all their cargoes, though belonging to enemies, except contraband, that is, military stores. France and Spain have approved of it, and it is likely to become henceforth the law of nations, that *free ships make free goods*. England does not like this confederacy. I wish they would extend it still farther, and ordain, that unarmed trading ships, as well as fishermen and farmers, should be respected, as working for the common benefit of mankind, and never be interrupted in their operations, even by national enemies; but let those only fight with one another, whose trade it is, and who are armed and paid for the purpose.’

‘At length we are in peace, God be praised, and long, very long, may it continue. All wars are follies, very expensive and very mischievous ones. When will mankind be convinced of this, and agree to settle their differences by arbitration? Were they to do it, even by the cast of a die, it would be better than by fighting and destroying each other.’

In 1774, Dr. Franklin thus writes from London to a friend in this country on the subject of some imputations, unfavorable to his character for patriotism.

‘I see in a Boston paper of August 18th, an article expressing, “that it is generally believed Dr. Franklin has received a promise of being restored to the royal favor, and promoted to an office superior to that which he resigned.” I have made no public answer to any of the abuse I have received in the papers here, nor shall I to this. But as I am anxious to preserve your good opinion, and as I know your sentiments, and that you must be much afflicted yourself, and even despise me, if you thought me capable of accepting any office from this government, while it is acting with so much hostility towards my native country, I cannot miss this first opportunity of assuring you, that there is not the least foundation for such a report; that, so far from having any promise of royal favor, I hear of nothing but royal and ministerial displeasure, which, indeed, as things at present stand, I consider as an honor. I have seen no minister since January, nor had the least communication with them. The generous and noble friends of America in both Houses do indeed favor me

with their notice and regard ; but they are in disgrace at court, as well as myself. Be satisfied, that I shall do nothing to lessen me in your esteem, or my own. I shall not, by the least concurrence with the present measures, merit any court favor, nor accept of any, if it were offered me, which, however, is not at all likely to happen.'

The following letter was written after his final return from Europe, and a few years only before his death. It gives perhaps as near a view as it is possible now to obtain, of the domestic life of the great philosopher.

'I have found my family here in health, good circumstances, and well respected by their fellow citizens. The companions of my youth are indeed almost all departed, but I find an agreeable society among their children and grandchildren. I have public business enough to preserve me from *ennui*, and private amusement besides in conversation, books, my garden, and *cribbage*. Considering our well furnished, plentiful market as the best of gardens, I am turning mine, in the midst of which my house stands, into grass plots and gravel walks, with trees and flowering shrubs. Cards we sometimes play here, in long winter evenings, but it is as they play at chess, not for money, but for honor, or the pleasure of beating one another. This will not be quite a novelty to you, as you may remember we played together in that manner during the winter at Passy. I have indeed now and then a little compunction, in reflecting that I spend time so idly ; but another reflection comes to relieve me, whispering, "*You know that the soul is immortal ; why then should you be such a niggard of a little time, when you have a whole eternity before you?*" So, being easily convinced, and, like other reasonable creatures, satisfied with a small reason, when it is in favor of doing what I have a mind to, I shuffle the cards again, and begin another game.

'As to public amusements, we have neither plays nor operas, but we had yesterday a kind of oratorio, as you will see by the enclosed paper ; and we have assemblies, balls, and concerts, besides little parties at one another's houses, in which there is sometimes dancing, and frequently good music ; so that we jog on in life as pleasantly as you do in England, any where but in London, for there you have plays performed by good actors. That, however, is, I think, the only advantage London has over Philadelphia.'

Our limits have restricted us to a very cursory notice of this interesting volume, which is rendered more valuable by the

fact, that a small portion only of the familiar correspondence of Dr. Franklin has heretofore been given to the world. Mr. Sparks, its editor, has placed the public under new obligations to himself, for the ability and diligence with which he is laboring to preserve from oblivion the facts and documents that may serve to illustrate our history, and of the characters of our distinguished men.
